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ABSTRACT

William S. Gray, Professor of Education and Dean of the College of Education at the University of Chicago, began work in 1929 on a major revision of the "Elson Readers," a popular basal series published by Scott, Foresman and Company. Organized around the daily life of two ordinary children, the "Dick and Jane" readers ultimately became the most widely used reading books in the country. Beginning in the 1940s, however, education critics claimed that the books contained stereotyped characters, and were sexist and racist. Although the books merely reflected the social aspirations of the time, Gray admitted that the upper-class, suburban setting was irrelevant to the lives of increasing numbers of children, and that this might be a factor in the poor reading progress of black and lower-class children. The controlled vocabulary and phonics method in the readers were also criticized, but these techniques were grounded in research, and Gray believed that phonics was an aid (not an end) to word recognition. If the offensive qualities of the Dick and Jane readers are seen in context--in terms of the entirety of Gray's work, in comparison with what preceded, in the contemporary society, and in educational knowledge--and not judged in terms of later standards and according to an adult point of view, the complaints are less supportable. Guided by his goal of producing basals readable by children and suitable for teaching them to read, Gray produced a series of books which, more than any other series, incorporated recent developments in reading, introduced new stories using established juvenile authors and noted artists, and correlated content area reading with basal reading by means of interesting stories relating to children's own lives. Seven pages of references, including articles, letters, and readers by William Gray are appended. (HTH)

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WILLIAM S. GRAY AND THE DICK AND JANE READERS

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Abstract

Gray began work in 1929 on a major revision of Scott, Foresman's basal series. Because these new readers became the most widely used reading books in the country and as such were widely criticized in the 1950's and 1960's as boring and stereotypic, a new look at them in the 1980's might be worthwhile. Gray's decision to join Scott, Foresman is examined, and the new readers are compared with their predecessors. The new pre-primer included new stories revolving around children's experiences and the now-famous Dick and Jane; more interesting stories with more action, suspense, surprises, humor, and problems to solve; brighter pictures; fewer new words which were repeated more. They had been tried out extensively in schools and incorporated the most recent developments in reading, including influences from the two educational movements in which Gray had been so involved--Herbartianism and the scientific study of reading. Offering content area readers, workbooks, and tests, this series was more comprehensive, more interesting, more readable, more useful, and better printed than other series of the time.

The complaints about the series--that it was stereotypic, sexist, racist, too easy, neglectful of phonics instruction and moral lessons--are seen in terms of the entirety of Gray's work, in comparison with what had preceded, and in the environment of contemporary society and educational knowledge. Gray took ideas that existed and improved them in order to produce a successful series of basal readers which profoundly influenced the course of American reading instruction.

WILLIAM S. GRAY AND THE DICK AND JANE READERS

William S. Gray, Professor of Education and Dean of the College of Education at the University of Chicago, began work in 1929 on a major revision of the Elson Readers, a popular basal series published by Scott, Foresman and Company. Because he organized the new pre-primer around the daily life of two ordinary children named Dick and Jane, the readers were soon known by those names and ultimately became the most widely used reading books in the country (Black, 1967; Chall, 1967; Madison, 1966). Their impact can be judged both by their longevity (they were published until the 1960's) and by the fact that they still are inspiring references and imitations (Boye, 1982; "Cartoon," 1984; Gallant, 1985).

In addition, these readers brought about a lingering debate in American education. They were called "horrible, stupid, emasculated, pointless, tasteless" (Flesch, 1955, p. 6) and criticized as "unsurpassably bad," with no exciting or daring episodes, no contributions to patriotic or moral education, "mere comic books in hardcovers" (Trace, 1965, pp. 129, 139). Their method, called the look-and-say or word method, was termed "Programmed Retardation" (Trace, 1965, p. 28) and deplored as the result of Progressive Education (Chall, 1967; Flesch, 1955). Because of the importance of the Gray readers and since several decades have passed since their demise, it might now be worthwhile to take a new look at them. What was Gray's part in their production? How did they differ from what had existed before and what was contemporary with them? Are they as stereotypic as described and, if so, how might that fact be explained? In short, exactly what did these readers contribute to American reading instruction and how might they be evaluated today?

Association with Scott, Foresman

Gray's Early Ideas on Basals

In the 1920's the trend was for prominent educators to become involved in a series of basal readers. Many were so associated, including Guy Buswell and Frank Freeman from the University of Chicago. Gray, as chairman of the committee which produced the 24th Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education (Whipple, 1925), was the national authority on reading, his name "a household word" among teachers (McAndrew, 1924). He also at the same time had published the first of his long series of research summaries (Gray, 1925b), making him unusually knowledgeable about research in the field. Therefore, he had many invitations to work on basals, which he consistently refused, citing the fact that he had further investigations to finish before he would be ready for a series of readers (Gray, 1921c).

During this period, however, in his letters and reviews he was forming and expressing his ideas on worthwhile readers. They should be interesting from a child's point of view, about children's immediate activities and organized into thought units which continued the same characters. He promoted attractive illustrations, legible print, and well-written stories full of climaxes and suspense but simple enough so that children could experience success in reading them. Teachers' manuals should be detailed and up-to-date, with suggestions for all types of students, focusing on content but including adequate training in word analysis. Broad and comprehensive activities should accompany each unit in order to extend reading into children's lives (Gray, 1921a and b; 1922; 1925-1926; 1926). Not for him were the old-time readers which he had used himself as both a student and a public school teacher: "inane and disjointed" content developed in terms of adult logic, not children's minds (Huey, 1908, pp. 178-179).

These new ideas were compatible with the Herbartianism Gray had been immersed in at Illinois State Normal University and also with the scientific study of education which he had been introduced to by both Charles Judd at the University of Chicago and Edward L. Thorndike at Teachers College. From Herbartianism came the importance of interest, children's experiences, ease of reading, and wide supplementary reading. From scientific study came a concern for silent reading and individual differences, the use of scientific research and psychological principles, constant checks on progress, and vocabulary control.

Joining Scott, Foresman

Throughout the 1920's Gray had had contacts with E.H. Scott, the president of Scott, Foresman. In 1925 he refused an offer of $1000 per year to be technical advisor on problems of reading instruction, saying that he wasn't interested in such a contract but that maybe in a few years the company might want a change in their Elson Readers (Gray, 1925a; Scott, 1925). To be sure, by 1929 the company was interested in such a change and so Gray joined them at that time. There are several reasons why he might have made that choice. For one thing, Scott, Foresman was a publisher which had made many innovations in school texts and it had also concentrated from the beginning on statewide textbook adoptions, thus appealing to Gray's sharp business sense. In addition, several University of Chicago professors were writing school books for that company (Black, 1967; A Half-Century of Scott-Foresman Progress, 1933; Madison, 1966).

A final attraction for Gray would have been the firm's major basal series by William Elson, a comprehensive reading program from kindergarten through high school, including workbooks, extension readers, and supplementary equipment such as word cards and charts (A Half-Century, 1933). Elson's readers,

influenced by Herbartianism at least in part due to Gray's own work, had introduced several new trends into school readers: recognition of the needs and interests of children, varied content arranged in units, meaningful reading, functional phonics, natural language (Ide and Oberg, 1931). At the same time we can see in these readers remnants of the old-time reading instruction such as oral reading lessons, the goal of developing literary appreciation, a preponderance of folklore and mythology (Elson et al., 1920-1927).

The Elson Basic Readers

The revised readers, with Gray and Elson as co-authors, were called the Elson Basic Readers. They continued and intensified their predecessors' Herbartian tendencies and introduced other characteristics to make them more attractive, more up-to-date, and more useful to both students and teachers. They incorporated the most recent developments in reading, fresh material by leading juvenile authors, simplified vocabulary and sentence structure with the gradual introduction of new words and forms, the use of well-known artists, modern study helps, and the utilization of wide supplementary reading. A comparison of the Elson Basic pre-primer with the Elson pre-primer reveals that the former included ten new stories about Dick and Jane and their family. It had more pages, used fewer words, and was full of more action, suspense, surprises, humor, and problems to solve. The Elson Basic Primer, compared with its predecessor, continued these trends. Its stories were more interesting and its pictures brighter, it contained fewer new words which were repeated more, its content emphasized happiness and fun, it had been subjected to intensive trials in schools and to constant criticism from experts.

The new teacher's manual for the pre-primer and primer (Gray and Liek, 1931) was four times the length of the earlier one and infinitely deeper in scope and depth. It introduced the now-familiar three-pronged teaching method

of preparation, reading silently with questions, and supplementary practice and correlated activities, followed by review and testing. A veritable textbook on reading, it discussed recent reforms and broadened aims in reading, the well-coordinated Scott, Foresman program, the development of the new readers, vocabulary control, the place of word recognition, the stages of reading progress, and varied types of pupils. In addition, it offered over 150 pages of specific teaching suggestions which emphasized meaning but also provided for varied word recognition activities. Book lists and tests were included.

Books 1-6 were constructed to provide sequential growth in reading ability according to pupils' stages of development, with concepts and skills becoming more mature in each book. The workbooks accompanying the readers, according to a study (Sletten, 1940) comparing workbooks of the early 1930's for ten basal series, were the longest and most comprehensive of all, with special strengths in vocabulary enrichment and training in comprehension, organization, interpretation, and locating information. Thus this carefully developed series of readers gives evidence of basic qualities of Gray's work: broad training in both a humanistic/empirical and scientific approach to education, a strong classroom sense, the latest knowledge of what was being done in reading, and an indefatigable attention to details as well as the whole.

The "most spectacular feature" (Smith, 1965, p. 225) of the new Scott, Foresman reading program was a series of primary readers in content area fields correlated with the basic readers and with each other. These books were called the Curriculum Foundation Series, with Gray titled variously as Directing Editor or Reading Director. Three arithmetic books for grades 1-3 appeared between 1932 and 1934 (Studebaker, Findley, Knight, and Gray). There followed three health books, grades 1-3, 1933-1935 (Towse and Gray); three art

books, grades 1-3, 1933-1935 (Whitford, Liek, and Gray); three science books, grades 1-3, 1933-1936 (Beauchamp, Crampton, and others); and four social studies books, primer through grade 3, 1935-1938 (Hanna, Anderson, and Gray).

According to the teacher's manual (Gray, 1934), this series was necessitated by changing social needs and a clearer understanding of learning problems. As Gray had long advocated, reading was being seen as related to every classroom activity and the materials for teaching reading as threefold: basals, supplementary story-type reading, and materials in other school subjects. These new books repeated the basal vocabulary and introduced the special vocabulary of their particular areas. Simple enough to be easily read by primary children and written by authors who were experts in their fields, they induced motivation by means of their interesting stories and colorful illustrations. The major themes, to be developed by activities of vital interest for the acquisition of concepts and the use of subject matter skills to solve problems, were the interdependence of members of families and of families with others in the community and man's relationship with nature. An important feature of the social studies primer was the topic of adjusting conflicts, children learning to compromise when they disagreed with others.

New editions of the Elson Basic Readers brought revisions and innovations. The Elson-Gray Basic Readers in 1936 contained updated and more richly colored pictures. The teacher's manual incorporated new sections on reading readiness and the correlation of lessons with content readers and enlarged sections on supplementary reading, individualization, and broadened aims. A second pre-primer (Elson and Gray, 1934) and a pre-reader (Gray and Monroe, 1937) were provided as well as a collection of group reading tests. In the 1940's came a second revision, called Basic Readers, with Gray and May Hill Arbuthnot the co-authors. New primary and junior high books were added and

the Curriculum Foundation Series expanded. The 1940's brought the third revision of the Elson Basics, the New Basic Readers by Gray, Arbuthnot, A. Sterl Artley, and Marion Monroe. Stories were changed, pictures updated, some rural background deleted, and more action, plot, humor, and problem solving added to the stories. In the 1960's, with Gray gone and times changing, the New Basic Readers were reworked by Helen Robinson, Monroe, and Artley, and multi-ethnic and i.t.a. editions appeared, as well as Wide Horizons for faster students and Open Highways for slower ("Scott, Foresman Readers," n.d.; Smith, 1965).

Gray's Role in Producing the Readers

One student of American textbooks (Black, 1967) has generalized that the teacher/author whose name was on the cover was usually the least consequential member of the team, hardly ever originating ideas, merely offering the prestige of his title or position to supply authority. We might wonder if such was the case with Gray and the Elson Basics. Fortunately a series of letters is available in the University of Chicago Department of Education Papers which Gray wrote beginning in 1929 to the authors and editors of the new stories. These letters can give us insight into the role Gray played in developing the readers. Was he a mere figurehead?

Several letters were written to Elson (Gray, 1929a) about the material in the fourth reader. Gray had looked over the new material and found a large number of appealing selections. However, he wanted more varied and interesting stories about contemporary life which presented children with real problems to think about. A second larger group of letters was written to Anna B. Towse, who was writing stories for the readers in health (Gray, 1929b). He recommended not didacticism but good strong story elements with gripping plots, humor, and interesting settings. In order to make the selections appropriate for first graders, he sent along one word list and recommended

others, to be widely used especially in the first 50 pages. He also offered encouragement, pointing out that "we are engaged in a pioneer undertaking and we must attack it in that light" (September 25, 1929).

Several other letters were written to G.W. Kelly, editor-in-chief for Scott, Foresman (Gray, 1933). In these Gray worried about the difficulty of some concepts in the first science reader, suggesting that a teacher or supervisor react to those parts. He also had ideas for ways to relate Book 3 of the Standard Service Arithmetics more closely to the arithmetic readers in the Curriculum Foundation Series. It should be organized in terms of children's interests and experiences instead of in terms of mathematical concepts; it should provide an explanation of the social value of the mathematical functions presented; it should attend to the meanings of new terms, control of vocabulary, and training in reading mathematics; and it should be generously and attractively illustrated. He was specific about elements contributing to "ease of reading and interpretation as shown by scientific studies carried on under my direction" and offered to go over authors' first drafts, exemplifying "in concrete terms" as necessary (August 1, 1933).

The standards for satisfactory readers expressed in these letters to Gray's co-workers are all familiar ideas: vital material on familiar experiences, a variety of material in order to meet varied interests and establish varied attitudes and purposes, interesting selections with strong plot and humor, thoughtful material presenting problems, well-written stories appropriate to their age group in both concepts and vocabulary, attractive illustrations, reworking of material in terms of criticisms from the field, the development of content area reading. Since these are the very qualities which we have noted as distinguishing the Elson Basic Readers, we may infer that

Gray was not a mere figurehead. The changes made in the new readers would seem to have been made as a result of his general guidance and in terms of his philosophy about the teaching of reading which had been formed earlier in his life because he had been a part of several phases of an extraordinarily exciting educational period. Furthermore, he appears to have offered more than only general guidance. He provided authors with specific suggestions after he had seen their manuscripts and exemplified "in concrete terms." He also tendered encouragement and inspiration in an enterprise which he correctly understood would make a "notable contribution" indeed to American education.

Evaluation of the Readers

Immediate reactions to the new readers was enthusiastic. One reading supervisor wrote Gray that children in her district turned to the "delightful" pre-primer "as a favorite when they first feel power to read from the library table by themselves" (Laurie, 1931). C.T. Gray's review (1932) praised the readers' interesting material, the excellent discussions in the manuals, and the series' progress in meeting the new changed demands of reading. The one weakness mentioned in this review which was not improved in the next revision was the lack of suggestions for teaching poetry. Perhaps this lack can be explained by Gray's own admission that he was not a good critic of poetry (1929a). Scott, Foresman delineated the contributions of the new series. The outstanding contribution was "strict vocabulary control" in interesting stories: "Some previous books had been easy, but dull; others had been interesting, but too difficult. Dr. Gray produced a workable combination of interest and simplicity" (A Half-Century, 1933, p. 38). The middle-grade books not only taught skills and fostered interests but also organized supplementary and home reading into interesting units, thus putting to work the resources of both school and home-library shelves. Another evaluation of

the readers is the 31-page mimeographed pamphlet titled Facts for Use in Evaluating the Elson Basic Readers by the Idaho Score Sheet (n.d.). It includes tightly packed factual information, a bibliography of 112 items which were used in the preparation of the readers, and numerous tables and charts. The books are especially praised for their accord with accepted reading objectives, their verification under actual classroom conditions, their facilitation of diagnostic and remedial reading, their provisions for effective teaching procedures, and their vocabulary development and mechanical features.

A comparison of Gray's readers with representative readers contemporary to them would seem to be a valuable way of pinpointing Gray's contributions. One interesting finding is that his work was cited in several cases as the basis of other authors' programs (Bolenius, 1923b; Freeman et al., 1927-1929). Thus we find in the other readers some of the same characteristics as in Gray's readers, but the important point is that no other series has all the characteristics of the Elson Basics. None are as interesting because their stories contain more description than action and not as much surprise and humor, if any. Several (Freeman et al., 1927-1929; Gecks et al., 1928; Watterworth and Castle, 1932) are not arranged in units and do not contain as wide a variety of stories. Bolenius (1923a and b, 1930), Freeman et al. (1927-1929), Gecks et al. (1928), and Lewis et al. (1923) control vocabulary but not so rigidly. The language of Bolenius (1923a and b, 1930) and Gecks et al. (1928) can be unnatural or complicated. The illustrations of three of the series (Bolenius, 1923a and b, 1930; Freeman et al., 1927-1929; Gecks et al., 1928) are in pale colors, and Bolenius does not provide tests and drill cards but suggests how teachers can make them. One attractive quality which Bolenius has and the Elson Basics do not to such a degree is an enchanting imagination.

Such a comparison with contermporary readers reveals the special qualities of the Elson Basic Readers. First was their comprehensiveness. Because they included all the characteristics of the other readers combined (except for Bolenius' imagination), and no other series did this, they evidence the same thoroughness and completeness which is exhibited in all of Gray's work. Second, the stories in the Elson Basics are from a child's point of view more interesting than the stories in other readers. They contain more suspense and surprises, more humor, more action and stronger plots, with complications or conflicts, climaxes, and resolutions. Third, since Gray's primary objective was to produce books which children could read, his readers are more carefully controlled--not just for vocabulary, but for sentence structure and concepts as well. Their language is relatively natural (if simple), their stories are arranged in units to promote thinking and wide reading around interest areas, and they contain stories of different kinds on different topics so as to appeal to different interests and to promote different kinds of reading. Their mechanical features are outstanding, especially the brightly colored pictures full of action and humor. Finally, the series is more complete than any other series, including several readers at each primary level, content area readers, manuals (even one for rural schools), separate readers for Catholic schools, workbooks, tests, wall charts and drill cards with card holders. Such a catalog of strengths would seem to more than explain the extraordinary success of the Elson Basic Readers.

Controversies

The Attacks

Beginning in the early 1940's numerous criticisms of American schools began to appear. They received impetus from President Roosevelt's announcement in May 1942 that thousands of young men were lost to the armed

services because they could not read. Then after the war school enrollments rose rapidly with an accompanying shortage of teachers and buildings, so that the attacks gained momentum in the late 40's and early 50's (Gray and Iverson, 1952). The continuing or even increasing numbers of reading problems in the schools were a matter of concern to Gray. On several occasions he discussed the complex of causes for these problems (Gray, 1939, 1940). Increased demands were being made on readers due to social changes such as the development of an urban society and the expansion of government functions. The large increase in school enrollment, especially at the high school and college levels, brought in students differing widely in needs and interests. Enriched curricula were increasing the demands made on readers, new standards of promotion were based on total achievement instead of success in reading, more pupils were remaining in school, teachers and school officials were becoming increasingly sensitive to reading disability and its causes, and provision for individual differences was accentuating differences in growth and attainments. Undesirable trends in the teaching of reading also contributed to reading problems (Gray, 1937). Therefore the criticism mounted, some tendered to relieve tensions resulting from cultural or personal anxieties, some prompted by ulterior motives such as slashing taxes or gaining money, and some honestly concerned about the quality of American education (Gray and Iverson, 1952). Dick and Jane, as the most widely used basal series, bore the brunt of the criticism.

The attacks were virulent, insulting, exaggerated, and full of errors. An example is Rudolf Flesch, who profited from two shrill and repetitious efforts (1955, 1981). According to him, reading means getting meaning from certain combinations of letters [true]. If the child is taught what each letter stands for, then he/she can read [but a letter by itself has no

meaning]. He praised a school he had visited in Brooklyn where first graders could pronounce words like "flamingo" and "curlicue," thus proving that they could read. He even managed to insult Gray: "... old Professor William S. Gray ... was called back from retirement to rebut my data. His answer was rather feeble" (1981, p. 41). Gray in retirement was hardly the frail Professor implied by Flesh: as Director of Research in Reading at the University of Chicago he continued to teach, traveled world-wide as lecturer and consultant, remained active in professional pursuits, and produced almost 100 publications (Gray, n.d.). Nor was his reply (1955) "feeble": it based its generalizations on considerably more studies than Flesch said it did and on considerably more than Flesch mentioned in both his books combined.

Stereotypes and Sexism

Flesch (1955) and Trace (1965) emphasized the stereotypes of the Dick and Jane stories. Admittedly there were stereotypes in these readers (in all readers, in fact, and in textbooks in general): mother was in an apron in the kitchen, father read the newspaper in an armchair after coming home from work, boys did masterly things and girls were helpless. However, these books must be put in their context; they did not exist in a vacuum. During the first half of the twentieth century, the purpose of textbooks, as stated by the 1918 National Education Association Commission on Reorganization of Secondary Education, was citizenship education--to turn the children of immigrants into literate citizens, "imbuing them with the middle-class American dream and a fervid, if not imaginative, sense of patriotism" (Black, 1967, p. 136).

Furthermore, of all the artifacts produced by modern civilization, "none compares with the schoolbook as a mirror of that civilization's aspirations and failings" (Black, 1967, p. 73). The New England Primer was preoccupied with death and anti-Catholic teachings, Webster's Blue-Backed Speller was full

of moralistic and patriotic material, and the McGuffey Readers presented a moralistic code of conduct. The new readers of the 1930's and 1940's similarly reflected the idealistic and materialistic values shaping American society: children as models of hope and happiness, an emphasis on material goods, childhood as a time free of cares and responsibility, idealized families in suburban settings (Black, 1967; Steuer and Steddom, 1979). A look at the society of the time reveals reasons for this portrayal: a reaction had set in to the abusive conditions of nineteenth century child labor; the family was centering its attention and aspirations on children; the era of Progressive Education was aiming at social cooperation and conformity to social norms; the suburbs were growing with startling speed; the working force was male and mothers stayed at home; the atmosphere of despair during the Depression led to increased emphasis on positive expression; Americans needed and wanted a feeling of assurance, stability, and security in the face of world wars, political graft, and business worries (Allen, 1952; Aries, 1962; Ravitch, 1983; Steuer and Steddom, 1979). "The ideal was the well-adjusted student, who was prepared to live effectively as a worker, a home member, and a citizen" (Ravitch, 1983, p. 68).

Never one to resist change, Gray, according to his daughter, "accepted criticism of the Dick and Jane readers graciously. He admitted that the upper class, suburban setting of the stories was indeed irrelevant to the lives of increasing numbers of children using the books, and he favored changing this aspect at least" (Grace W. Gray, 1984). He could rest assured that in the increasingly child-centered schools readers were reflecting children's preferences (Gunderson, 1937). As he reported in his first research summary (Gray, 1925b), studies on children's interests in reading showed that they like familiar experiences, repetition, characters from home or child life,

surprise, action, conversation, humor, kindness and faithfulness; they dislike abstractness, lack of reality, gloom, monotony, poor literary style, material that is too long, too depressing, too difficult. These findings would seem to account for many of the qualities of Gray's readers.

Another point not usually mentioned is that along with the stereotypes in the Dick and Jane readers, there also were the opposite--people in non-stereotypic roles. Girls could be as brave as boys (Elson and Gray, Book Two, 1931), boys played with dolls and paper dolls (Whitford, Liek, and Gray, 1933), boys and girls both cooked and built in the shop (Gray, Artley, and Arbuthnot, 1951), mothers sometimes engaged in work to provide necessities (Hanna, Anderson, and Gray, 1935), a man who was forced to keep house learned that it was not so easy (Gray and Arbuthnot, 1946). In any event, critics of sexism in basal readers merely counted: the problem was not considered from the viewpoint of its impact on the motivation and learning of children. Does sexism in books develop sex stereotypes in children? Should books portray the real world in which males are predominantly employed and females are homemakers or an idealized world? Such questions should be studied scientifically, without bias on the part of the investigators (Kingston and Lovelace, 1977-1978).

Racism

Until the 1960's American children saw an almost completely white world in their textbookss (Black, 1967). The Scott, Foresman readers were no exception. Toward the end of his life, before his death in 1960, Gray noted this problem. At the opening session of the 19th University of Chicago Conference on Reading, he spoke on the "Sociological Aspects of Reading Interests" and pointed out that lack of progress in reaching lower class children might be because reading materials in schools related more closely to

the middle and upper middle classes. Teachers should arouse interests by class activities and the use of a wide variety of books (University of Chicago Department of Press Relations, 1956).

In addition, it should be remembered that only at the time of World War II were the Negro's demands for justice speeded up as the gap between the pretense of equality and the reality of inequality was dramatized (Commager, 1950). Then in the 1950's the black revolution first flowered in Montgomery, Alabama, and received impetus from the 1954 Supreme Court decision ending school segregation. Only at that point did there begin to be a movement toward changing textbooks. The forces against change were formidable: teachers who avoided controversial issues, taxpayers who would not allow controversial issues in the classroom, the textbook industry's unwillingness to invest in innovation (Black, 1967). Therefore, not until the 1960's did there come about a "Revision of the Vision"--settings, characters, themes, literary form were transformed in basal readers; all ages, socioeconomic statuses, colors, cultures, times, and places began to be represented along with more realistic problems and solutions (Steuer and Steddom, 1979).

Vocabulary Control

Although Trace called vocabulary control in the "Dick-and-Jane type basal readers ... crippling" and "devastating" (1965, pp. 57-58), it was a practice at least as old as the 1700's when special versions of the Bible were printed to teach children beginning reading (Chall, 1958), and even those arguing against it admitted that it did help children succeed in reading (Stone, 1943). Gray based his firm belief in it on the research of Arthur Gates (1930), which found that an average number of 20 to 55 repetitions, depending on the children's intelligence, was necessary for vocabulary acquisition. He also was well aware of the studies of reading disability which showed that

overloaded vocabulary caused children to become discouraged and to lose interest in reading (Hildreth, 1943).

More recent work by Gates confirmed his earlier conclusions about the importance of vocabulary control (Gates, 1949; Weintraub, 1967), and in the 1960's "healthy correlations" were found between the frequency of the occurrence of words in reading programs and speed of recognition, leading recent investigators to recommend a two-track system of reading instruction--daily reading of both easy and difficult selections on the same topic, the former for fluency, the latter for knowledge structure (Beck, 1981). In this connection it should be noted that Gray recommended for an adequate vocabulary by the end of the primary grades not only repetition of words to insure mastery but also wide supplementary reading and directed help in attaching meaning to words (Gray and Holmes, 1938). Probably because basal authors were influenced by what others were doing, by the 1940's basals were repeating words more often than Gates found useful even for slow learners (Chall, 1967). Therefore, the more recent tendency has been for more natural language in readers and less closely controlled vocabulary. The Scott, Foresman series introduced 434 words in first grade in 1930 (Elson and Gray, 1930), 335 words in 1960, and 675 in 1970 (Rodenborn and Washburn, 1974).

The Teaching of Phonics

Gray's views on the teaching of phonics were set forth in numerous publications to help classroom teachers (e.g., Gray, 1936, 1940, 1948 and 1960; Gray and Liek, 1936). According to him, phonics is one of several aids to word recognition, which also include the use of context, the general form of words, details of words, familiar elements in words, principles of syllabication and accent, and the use of the dictionary (Gray, 1936). Word perception is one of four components of the interpretation of printed matter,

the others being comprehension of ideas, reaction to ideas, and integration of ideas with previous experience. In other words, word perception is one component of interpretation, and phonetic word analysis is one of several aids to word perception (Gray, 1948 and 1960). Thus phonics should not be thought of as a method of learning to read but as one of several aids in recognizing words (Gray, 1936). As such, it is a crucial component of reading instruction but not the "'be-all and end-all'" (Gray, 1948 and 1960, p. 29). As Gray explained, "any program of guidance in reading which is concerned primarily with the basic habits and skills involved in the recognition of words, and only secondarily with the meanings represented and the changes produced in the life of the reader, is in our opinion inadequate to meet contemporary needs" (Gray, 1940, pp. 20-21).

Gray elaborated his position in his handbook on the teaching of word analysis, On Their Own in Reading (1948 and 1960). He was reacting to the extremes of beginning reading instruction before 1930: on the one hand, word perception as an end in itself which resulted in drill on word lists and in isolated sentences, and, on the other hand, radical emphasis on meaning with no teaching of specific words by any method. Both extremes resulted in illiterates unable to read. Therefore, he attempted to integrate the teaching of phonics more closely with the whole reading process by controlling vocabulary in interesting stories and by spelling out new techniques for developing power in word perception in practical teachers' manuals which presented a sequenced but flexible and functional program. Toward the end of his life he noted two trends which he had found in a life-long and international study of beginning reading instruction: an eclectic approach emphasizing both meaning and word recognition and learner-centered content relating to children's interests and learning styles, both trends, he said, "a

product of the tested experiencce of the race" (Gray, 1957, p. 18). What he did for phonics was to put it in the larger setting of a broad view of reading, interweave it with all the word perception skills, present it with practical exercises as part of a logical sequential development of all reading skills, and urge that children be encouraged to derive inductively their own generalizations of linguistic relationships from their study of concrete examples (Strang, 1967).

Gray and Arthur Gates were attacked by Flesch and Trace as the leaders in promoting whole word reading. They also were misrepresented by more reasonable and knowledgeable observers. Balmuth (1982), for instance, claimed that Gray's "beliefs about reading instruction came to be wholly centered on whole word reading ... and by minutely spelling out its methodology, he eventually formalized the twentieth century whole-word doctrine in its most widely used form" (p. 198). That Gray's beliefs were "wholly" centered on whole word reading is incorrect, as has just been discussed. Chall (1967) in her extensive examination of "The Great Debate" on learning to read, took one page of a Dick and Jane reader out of context, declared it dull, and then blamed Gray for the "dismal" situation of a meaning emphasis dominating beginning reading instruction for so long (pp. 96-98). During the years since Chall's book, the situation has settled somewhat and the current view would appear as though it could have been stated by William Gray: in spite of Chall's "landmark study" and "the uneasy consensus favoring phonics instruction" over the last decade, an "eclectic" approach is currently in favor and Chall's differences have become blurred (Beck, 1981, pp. 58-59).

Additional Support for Dick and Jane

Several final arguments can be made in defense of the Scott, Foresman readers. For one thing, their success is frequently ignored. Gray himself

kept saying that reading achievement was greater than ever (1942, 1960). Modern thought would seem to corroborate this view. Roger Farr (1981), for instance, agrees that reading achievement was increasing during the 1940's and 1950's and that "material/student ability fit is still a solid instructional concept" (p. 15). In connection with Trace's claims (1965) that basals of the 1950's did not contain moral lessons aimed at character building, one study (Anderson, 1956) compared the moral values inculcated by the nineteenth century McGuffey Readers and those of two recent readers. Of the three readers compared, the one by Gray came out highest on eight of the ten values. Also, the directed reading lesson, the traditional format promoted by Gray for elementary reading instruction--preparation, setting purpose, reading, questioning, discussing--has been upheld by recent research on comprehension (Beck, 1981). Predesignated schemata provide an organizational frame for comprehension and recall, thus emphasizing the importance of prior knowledge as a contributor to comprehension. Finally, we might remember that studies of school readers have been mainly descriptive (Willows, Borwick, and Hayvren, 1981). Important questions have had no or meager evidence provided: the effects on beginning reading of short simple sentences, word repetition, and total number of words taught; whether children identify with characters in readers; whether pictures facilitate the learning of sight words. Therefore, like all basal authors, Gray based his readers on intuition, experience, and as much evidence as was available.

Explanation for Attacks

When asking why these attacks and misinterpretations took place, we might remember that much of the dissatisfaction about basal readers has grown out of their misuse or the exclusive use of them rather than their own inherent limitations (Artley, 1961). Several recent studies have examined properties

of the classroom environment which might account for such misuse. In her observations of comprehension instruction, Durkin (1978-1979) found that workbooks and ditto sheets, most of which were busy work, constituted almost all of the instruction because teachers tend to do what's easy and what they think is expected by administrators and parents. Doyle (1983) found that tasks involving higher level cognitive processes are difficult for teachers and students and therefore the easier routine and memory tasks are more prevalent. Finally, Shannon (1983) focused on teachers' overreliance on commercial reading materials to the exclusion of other forms of instruction because they feel they have no control over its content, method, and pace. Therefore, to place criticism for poor reading instruction on the basals and their authors might be misplaced; in the final anaylsis materials are only as good as the people who use them.

Gray's Contributions

Thus if the supposedly offensive qualities of the Dick and Jane readers are seen in context--in terms of the entirety of Gray's work, in comparison with what had preceded, in the environment of the society and educational knowledge contemporary with them, and not judged in terms of later standards and according to an adult point of view, then the complaints must become extenuated or evanescent, and we can get to the job of attempting to judge exactly what Gray did contribute to reading instruction. Guided by his goal of producing readers able to be read by children and able to teach children to read, he oversaw a series of books which, more than any other series, incorporated recent developments in reading, introduced new stories by established juvenile authors, used well-known artists, were tested by teachers in actual classroom situations, offered detailed and eminently useful manuals full of practical suggestions, and correlated content area reading with basal

reading, teaching content area concepts and skills by means of interesting stories relating to children's own lives. The stories in these books were more appealing than the stories in other readers. They were centered around two interesting characters who were involved in a variety of experiences familiar to children. They were more readable due to the gradual introduction of words, more frequent repetition of words, fewer new words, carefully controlled sentence structure, and sequential development of thinking and reading skills within each book and from book to book.

The illustrations were brighter, the first in four colors, and contained more humor, action, and story-telling qualities. A careful attention to details meant that the mechanical features of the book were in accordance with the latest research. At the same time the total view of the program was broad: basals were seen as the core of a reading program which also included supplementary reading and content reading. The recommended teaching method combined the best of Herbartianism and the results of the scientific study of reading: preparation, reading, answering questions, rereading, supplementary reading and activities, correlation with other subjects, testing, remediation and drill as needed. Thinking skills were to be emphasized but functional phonics study had a place.

Gray's strong point was not originality. He took what existed and improved it. Herbartianism made the educational world aware of the importance of interest, using children's own experiences in teaching, planning lessons and methods, reading as thought getting. In addition, from Herbart came a concern for more attractive format and illustrations, simpler language, and supplementary reading (Herbart, 1904). The scientific study of reading had focused on the perceptual process involving words and phrases more than single letters, the importance of silent reading, hygienic conditions affecting

reading, individual variations, word counts and vocabulary control, the use of tests, broadened aims and objectives for a more varied reading program, and new instructional material and teachers' manuals. Simplified vocabulary had begun as early as the 1890's (Lamport, 1935), and Elson's readers in the 1920's had been rated very high in the number of repetitions of words (Irmina, 1929). Even Dick and Jane do not seem to have been Gray's creation but the idea of Zerna Sharp, a Scott, Foresman reading consultant (Hensley, 1981). However, by incorporating all those features into his readers, Gray was at the forefront of the trends in basals during the middle of the twentieth century. By utilizing his wide familiarity with investigations in reading, by preparing highly useful and practical teachers' manuals, by testing and perfecting his material in actual classroom use, by sequentially and comprehensively providing for the development of reading skills as well as attitudes, and by coordinating content area material with basal material in a program which was more useful and complete than any other one on the market at the time, Gray produced a series of basal readers which became the most widely used reading books in the country and which consequently set the course of American reading instruction.

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